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ABSTRACT

A sample of 176 Tennessee children and their mothers were studied in 1969 when the children were fifth or sixth graders and again in 1975 when they were eleventh or twelfth graders to determine changes in occupational and educational aspirations and expectations along with possible causes for such changes. Comparison of occupational aspirations and expectations showed that the percentage of students who aspired to professional-technical employment in 1969 had dropped to half that number in 1975. The percentage of those who expected such employment was even less. Educational goals also decreased, but to a lesser extent. Of those who aspired to post high school work in 1969, 62% were males and 60% females; in 1975, those percentages were 50% and 59%. Those who expected post high school work decreased to 27% and 30% respectively. Expectations for college work were 12% for males and 6% for females. Mothers' goals for their children showed similar patterns of decrease although mothers tended to have higher aspirations than their children, particularly for sons. By 1975, 28% of the boys and 43% of the girls had left school. Reasons given most often were dislike of school and lack of academic motivation. (Author/CM)

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March 1979 Bulletin 588

Occupational and Educational Goals of Rural Appalachian Children and Their Mothers

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Sadness is expressed at the death of Helen Reed at the time of final preparation of the manuscript.

SUMMARY

This study reports findings from a 6-year follow-up of Tennessee children and their mothers. Subjects were 176 mother-child pairs studied in 1969 when the children were 5th or 6th graders and again in 1975 when they were at an age to be 11th or 12th graders. They resided in a low-income rural Appalachian area of East Tennessee. Initially, subjects were part of the 7-state Southern Research Regional Project S-63 which focused on personal and family factors that influenced goals of young people in three subgroups in the Southeast. Children were given questionnaires in the classroom and mothers were interviewed in the home.

Changes in occupational and educational aspirations and expectations were analyzed along with possible causes for such changes. The longitudinal approach also made possible the identification of students who dropped out of school and the determination of variables measured in 1969 that might have predicted later dropout. Comparisons between questionnaire responses made by dropouts and stayins in 1975 were also carried out.

Comparison of **occupational** aspirations and expectations showed that in 1969 (when the average age of the respondents was 10.8 years), 42% of the males and 62% of the females aspired to professional-technical employment, but by 1975 (when the respondents had reached the average age of 16.8) these percentages were about half as great. The percentage of those who expected such employment was even less (15% and 9%, respectively).

Educational goals also decreased but to a lesser extent. Sixty-two percent of the males and 60% of the females aspired to post high school work in 1969; in 1975 these percentages were 50% and 59%. However, those who expected post high school work decreased to 27% and 30%, respectively. Expectations for **college** work were only 12% for males and 6% for females.

A majority of the youth had heard about their desired job through their parents or other adult friends or neighbors. Goals were evidently influenced by the facts that parents were employed mainly in the lower 5 categories of the U.S. Census classification and that parents had an average educational level of about the 8th grade. Realistic advice of parents was necessarily restricted in range. Fathers' employment was roughly similar to sons' aspirations although some sons indicated interest in the professional-technical category. There was little interest shown by sons in farming, managerial employment, or clerical-sales work.

Mothers' goals for their children showed similar patterns of decrease although mothers tended to have higher aspirations than

their children, particularly for sons. By 1975, 17% of the mothers of males and 14% of the mothers of females expected their children to attain professional-technical employment. Thirty-seven percent and 29% respectively, expected post high school work although only 13% and 12%, respectively, expected college attendance.

An important influence on mothers' and children's decreased aspirations and expectations was the high extent of anomia indicated by the mothers on an anomia scale. Despite this indication of apathy and hopelessness, only 8% of the mothers expressed dissatisfaction with their current living conditions.

When youth indicated barriers to obtaining their desired employment, over 60% were concerned about lack of job opportunities in their rural area; approximately 45%, lack of enough money to go to college; and about 35%, lack of job information, not wanting to move, schools attended, and not being smart enough.

About 80% indicated steady employment, a chance to make lots of money, a chance to help others, and exciting and interesting work as the most important aspects of their desired employment. Sixty-seven percent of the males compared to 32% of the females wanted a chance to be their own boss. About one-half of each sex wanted a chance to become an important person. Apparently the youth were thinking in terms of an ideal job and not necessarily in terms of the job they had named as desired.

Concerning marriage and family plans, 31% of the females and 7% of the males were married by 1975 when they were of an age to be 11th or 12th graders. Eleven percent of the females had children compared to 7% of the males. Average number of children desired was 2.0. Responses to items regarding whether a wife should work showed that 22% of the males and 8% of the females thought a wife should work only if the husband was unable to. At the opposite extreme, 28% of the males and 22% of females thought she should work if she wished. Concerning desired place of residence, about 75% preferred to remain in their own locality.

Regarding school dropout, by 1975 28% of the boys and 43% of the girls had left school or were reported to have dropped out. The majority indicated they had quit for good. Reasons given most often were dislike of school and lack of academic motivation. Marriage was given as the reason by 25% of the female dropouts and 4% of the males. Less than 10% indicated financial problems or academic problems although these may have been more important than admitted. Mothers tended to give reasons similar to those of their children although there were interesting differences.

The following 1969 variables were significantly related to dropping out of school: for both males and females—an IQ measure; for males only—lower educational goals; for females only—lower aca-

demic motivation, greater incidence of no husband in the home, mothers' lower educational goals, mothers' higher occupational goals.

Several items differentiated dropouts (males and females) from stayins in 1975. Dropouts desired less **education** and expected to get less (but their **occupational** goals did not differ from those of stayins). They perceived their parents as caring less about whether they finished high school and as caring less whether they went past high school. Mothers of dropouts in fact did hold lower educational goals. Families of dropouts had lower estimated annual income, and were less likely to take or read a daily newspaper or to listen to a news program. Several additional personal and family items differentiated males only or females only.

The brief follow-up carried out in 1976, a year after high school graduation for the stayins, showed that more graduates were working at paying jobs than dropouts, but few of either group were taking special training of any type. Only 2 of the 176 young people were known to be enrolled in college.

CONTENTS

Page

SUMMARY 3

INTRODUCTION 8

REVIEW OF LITERATURE 8
- Aspirations and Expectations 8
  - Theoretical perspectives 8
  - Career studies 9
  - Rural youth 10
- School Dropouts 11
  - Importance of the problem 11
  - Characteristics of the school dropout 11
  - Solutions 12

SAMPLE AND PROCEDURES 12
- Description of Sample Children and Families, 1969 13
- Follow-Up Study, 1975 13
- Additional Description of Sample Families, 1969 and 1975 14

RESULTS 15

OCCUPATIONAL GOALS AND RELATED INFORMATION 15
- Aspirations and Expectations 15
- Information Related to Job Choices 19
  - Youths' perceptions of job acquisition deterrents 19
  - Important aspects of desired employment 19
  - Opinions on marriage and family life 20
  - Mothers' goals for their children 21
  - Mothers' opinions on changes in financial condition and satisfaction with living conditions 22
  - Mothers' anomia 22
  - Fathers' employment and sons' aspirations 22

EDUCATIONAL GOALS AND RELATED INFORMATION 23
- Aspirations and Expectations 23
- Academic Motivation 25
- Influence of Parents and Others 25
- Mothers' Educational Goals for Their Children 25
- Youths' Perceptions of Parents' Educational Aspirations 26

SCHOOL DROPOUTS 26
Descriptive Information 26
Reasons for Dropping Out 26
1969 Variables Most Predictive of Later School Dropout 28
Comparison of Those Who Were Dropouts with Those Who Stayed in School 29
Work Status Comparison in 1976 of 1975 Graduates and Dropouts 29
SUMMARY AND IMPLICATIONS 30
REFERENCES 35

Occupational and Educational Goals of Rural Appalachian Children and Their Mothers

Judith L. Kuipers, Lois E. Southworth, and Helen M. Reed [1]

INTRODUCTION

This study reports findings from a 6-year follow-up of Tennessee children, who were 5th or 6th graders in 1969, and their mothers. Subjects were from families who lived in a low-income rural Appalachian area.[2]

The objectives of the 1975 follow-up were: 1) To determine changes in vocational and educational aspirations of children and their mothers and to analyze relationships to personal and family factors; 2) To predict which students are more likely to drop out or to remain in school based on personal and family factors; 3) To obtain information about current situational factors and plans related to education and occupation.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Much of the early literature on career status projections was written by sociologists who studied white, middle-class high school males in midwestern states. More recently, investigators from various disciplines have studied minority groups, females, and youth from low-income families, but there have been few longitudinal studies of any of these populations.

ASPIRATIONS AND EXPECTATIONS

Theoretical perspectives. The achievement theme in this country implies the doctrine of the "American dream." While it was previously believed that aspirations of low-income groups needed to be raised, currently some investigators believe that limited achieve-

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[2] These subjects were initially part of a 7-state project which involved three subgroups in the Southeast—rural Appalachian white, rural black, and urban black (Southern Regional Research Project S-63).

ments of the disadvantaged are primarily the result of limited opportunities and lack of job knowledge, not limited aspirations (Southern Regional Technical Committee for Family Life, 1973, 1974).

Definitional controversies exist in the literature in reference to aspirations and expectations. Differentiation in terms of "idealistic" and "realistic" may be too simplistic. Several investigators, notably Haller (1968), have come to the conclusion that both aspirations and expectations are within the **ideal** realm. **Aspirations** represent the extent of assimilation of cultural values, while **expectations** indicate the extent to which cultural values are modified by perception of expectations of significant others or by perception of barriers to the attainment of the idealized status. Expectations may not necessarily become more realistic.

One purpose of longitudinal investigation is to determine the extent to which status projections lead to planning and attainment, particularly for low-income youth and their parents. Ginzberg, Ginzburg, Axelrad, & Herman (1951) and Super (1953) proposed the theory that in occupational choice persons progress through stages of fantasy, tentativeness, and realism. These were seen as corresponding to life stages of preadolescence, early adolescence, and early adulthood. But one of the problems brought out by attempts to confirm this developmental theory, and other theories of vocational choice, is the lack of appropriate mechanisms of communicating occupational knowledge. Super and Hall (1978) pointed out that people "pursue" careers, "engage in" occupations, "get" jobs, and "occupy" positions and that the nouns are not really synonymous although they are often used interchangeably.

Career Studies. Most career studies in the past have been concerned with high school boys (e.g., Bachman, Green, & Wirtanen, 1971). However, a recent study that included both sexes (Gallup Youth Survey, 1977) found that 72% of the teenagers intended to go to college. Although 70% of the boys planned to go to college, the top career choices were traditional blue collar trades such as mechanic, carpenter, electrician, and plumber. Engineering was second, the legal profession third, teaching fourth, and professional athlete fifth. For females, secretary was first, teacher second, nurse third, other medical fourth, and veterinarian fifth. Gallup stated that the findings underscored the general lack of serious attention given to the important decisions young people make about their careers, as well as the absence of information about the training and abilities required, rewards offered, and competition for various jobs and professions.

Kelso (1975) found that anticipated stage of leaving school was significantly related to realism of vocational choices; that IQ exercised a complicated mediating effect on both vocational-choice atti-

tude and realism; and that in general both attitude and realism were linearly related to anticipated grade of leaving school. This largely confirms Ginzberg's theory of linearity of the vocational development process. But Kelso emphasized the need for further research on factors likely to be associated with atypical or discontinuous patterns of vocational development, such as socioeconomic level and parental work history.

Rural Youth. In a review of the literature on disadvantaged rural youth, Edington (1970) concluded that college and occupational aspirations of rural youth were lower, that they had more trouble getting a permanent job, and that their jobs were not as skilled or highly paid as those of non-rural youth. In the rural environment the range of occupational types was limited and few white-collar jobs were represented. Thus, the youth from rural areas did not develop attitudes, desire, or motivation to achieve occupational success in white-collar jobs. Varied findings on educational aspirations of farm youth were attributed to differences in socioeconomic levels of farmers in different sections of the country. In some rural areas there was lack of emphasis on formal education and youth did not perceive education as a dominant value.

The nature of financing is another important factor in that rural schools continue to be financed mainly by local property taxes which may provide an inadequate source of revenue. Therefore schools often cannot afford to provide adequate occupational information, counseling, appropriate technical-vocational training, and other needed services (Baumheier, Derr, & Gage, 1973; Schwarzweller, 1976; Severinson, 1967; Sher, 1978).

In a study of rural Appalachian young people, girls and their mothers tended to name the traditional employment options of teacher, nurse, and secretary. Forty-six percent of the boys and 67% of the girls aspired to professional-technical employment although only 15% of the civilian national labor force held employment in this category (Southworth & Kuipers, 1976). Many low-income families recognize the importance of training and/or higher education. However, they also believe they do not have much control of circumstances that allow them to provide such opportunities (Nelsen & Frost, 1971; Stevic & Uhlig, 1967). Thus, there has been increasing interest in measuring aspects of resignation and anomie in low-income rural families and implications for social action endeavors (Alix & Lantz, 1971; Polansky, Borgman, & Saix, 1972).

To summarize, most young people—independent of socioeconomic factors and education—probably pass through career developmental stages of fantasy, tentativeness, and realism based on correcting experiences. However, one important correcting experience may be geographical location in that studies reviewed here in-

dicate that industrialization relates positively to higher education and white-collar professions. Where economic opportunties are limited, as in rural Appalachia, expectations are depressed although earlier aspirations reflect the larger cultural values for education and professional careers.

SCHOOL DROPOUTS

Importance of the problem. The Manpower Administration Survey (Miles, 1973) was aimed at developing better programs for rural youth. Nearly 2,000 young people in the Southeast were surveyed concerning social and employment history. Conclusions indicated the dropout problem was critical and its prevention should be the highest priority objective of any program for rural youth. On the other hand, an earlier investigator pointed out that the credential value of the high school diploma itself was diminishing as more and more adolescents were persuaded to stay on until graduation (Tannebaum, 1968). In fact, it has been suggested that the anti-dropout campaign should be sharply curtailed; greater emphasis should be placed upon early school and preschool intervention; the range of educational options for young people age 16 to 18 should be broadened; and serious consideration should be given to reducing the number of years necessary for attaining a high school diploma (Bachman, et al., 1971).

Characteristics of the school dropout. There have been many summaries compiled of the wide range of characteristics of school dropouts, usually of males (Bachman, et al., 1971; Cervantes, 1965; Schreiber, 1967; Tseng, 1972). These include the numerous problems associated with socioeconomic and family background, low educational level of parents, inadequate services provided by schools and other agencies, ability limitations, rebelliousness and delinquency, and low aspirations. Bachman, et al., (1971) concluded that, for boys, dropping out represented a symptom of other problems which had their origins much earlier in life. However, it is recognized that there may be differences between early dropouts (before the 9th grade) and later dropouts. The former may have more problems in early grades in achievement (i.e., reading, etc.). A second "involuntary" group may leave school as a consequence of some personal crisis. A third group is made up of those who are capable, but who terminate their education for a variety of reasons which require investigation of sociological and psychological variables and examination of the educational philosophy and policies governing the school (Voss, Wendling, & Elliot, 1966).

One of the few longitudinal studies that included both boys and girls found that consequences of dropping out for girls were not so

severe as they were for boys. However, very few girls returned to school to obtain a diploma and they had a higher separation and divorce rate (Hathaway, Reynolds, & Monachesi, 1969).

A study in a rural Alabama school system (74% white) found an equal number of male and female dropouts; average age of 16 and grade level of 9.6; 64% below average in IQ; and 88% reading from 1 to 2 years below grade level. Primary reasons given by males for dropping out were employment and academic difficulty. Primary reasons for females were marriage and pregnancy. Only 4% were reported to present behavior problems (Nettles, 1973).

Solutions. Obviously, early identification with appropriate remediation and/or placement is the solution for children who show poor performance in the early grades. Many investigators have proposed ways to cope with the dropout problem after a young person reaches junior high school or high school. Scales (1969) studied 191 California high schools with the purpose of determining which services offered by the schools helped retain students. These included a wide range of services having to do with counseling, teaching, and curriculm.

From a broader standpoint, Cervantes (1965) listed a number of suggestions to prevent and/or decrease dropout rates. Later studies (e.g., Bachman, et al., 1971; Fitzsimmons, Cheever, Leonard, & Macunovich, 1969; Fuller & Friedrich, 1972; Kowalski & Cangemi, 1974) corroborated Cervantes' earlier recommendations. A few examples are given below.

Community—family clinics, health centers, day care centers, preschool parent-child centers

Government—work-study, work-training, job corps

Business—realistic job descriptions, job training programs, scholarships

Schools—multi-purpose programs, wide range of counseling services; early recognition of potential dropouts and appropriate help; small class size; teacher training

Volunteer groups—tutoring, helping teachers, conducting field trips

Family—stress importance of education to the child who should consider school his most important business; make sure child attends school and spends some time reading and/or studying at home; cooperate with teachers and school organizations

SAMPLE AND PROCEDURES

Since the 1975 follow-up was based on the 1969 Tennessee survey of 176 mother-child pairs, a brief discussion of the original sampling procedure is necessary.

The sample was selected from a rural Tennessee low-income county. Fifth and sixth graders in the four largest elementary schools were given questionnaires in the classrooms while mothers were contacted in the homes by interviewers who were residents of the area. Mothers and children categorized as upper income level were omitted from the sample. Other criteria included the stipulation that all children lived with the mother, stepmother, grandmother, or other satisfactory substitute as judged by the interviewer, and that IQ scores of the children were 70 or above on the group test of mental ability given on the day the questionnaire was administered.

Description of Sample Children and Families, 1969

An abbreviated list of selected characteristics is shown in Table 1. The 176 children (88 girls and 88 boys) had an average age of 10.8 years. Average IQ score of these 5th and 6th graders was 92.8 or in the low normal range for the test used. Average number of children in the families was 4.0; birth order of the children showed a relatively wide range. Fathers were present in 93% of the families. Only 2% of the families included the extended family (other relatives). Approximate average age of mothers was 38 years and of father 42 years. Average years of schooling of parents was about 8.2. This is lower than the 1970 average educational level of 11.1 years for the State of Tennessee and of 12.1 for the nation.[3] Only 3% of the mothers and 2% of the fathers had attended school past the 12th grade. Average age of marriage of mothers was 19.5 and of fathers, 22.5.

Follow-up Study, 1975

In the spring of 1975, the 176 children who were studied in 1969 were expected to be in the 11th or 12th grade. Ninety-two percent of the initial sample were located. Mothers were interviewed in the homes as before, and the Youth Questionnaire was given in the school under the supervision of the high school counselor. Interviewers asked youth who had dropped out of school to fill in the Youth Questionnaire and also a brief questionnaire regarding reasons for dropping out, current situation, and future plans. If subjects could not be located, usually because they had moved from the area, the interviewers tried to obtain information from relatives or friends as to whether the youth had stayed in school.

An additional follow-up was carried out in the spring of 1976. The main purpose was to ascertain what the 1975 graduates were doing a year after graduation and to compare responses with information obtained from dropouts.

[3]Center for Business and Economic Research, University of Tennessee, Tennessee Statistical Abstract, 1977 (4th edition), Knoxville, Tennessee.

Table 1. Selected characteristics of sample children and parents, 1969

Characteristic	
Age of children	
	Mean: 10.8 years
	Range: 9-13
IQ score on Otis-Lennon Mental Ability Test[a]	
	Mean: 92.8
	Range: 70-120
Number of children in family	
	Mean: 4.0
	Range: 1-11
Age of mother or mother substitute[b]	
	Mean: 37.8 years
	Range: 27-60
Age of father	
	Mean: 42.5 years
	Range: 22-65
Schooling of mother	
	Mean: 8.4 years
	Range: 2-14
Schooling of father	
	Mean: 8.0 years
	Range: 1-16
Age of mother at marriage	
	Mean: 19.5 years
	Range: 13-43
Age of father at marriage	
	Mean: 22.5
	Range: 15-45

[a]Children with a score of less than 70 were not included in the study.

[b]3% of children lived with a satisfactory mother substitute.

Additional Description of Sample Findings, 1969 and 1975

Descriptive data obtained in 1969 were presented above, but additional items that were asked in both 1969 and 1975—such as employment status of each parent—give further information.

Employment of parents. Eighty-six percent of fathers were employed in 1969 compared to 67% in 1975. Over one-half the fathers worked in jobs classified as craftsmen or operatives; nearly 20% in 1969 and 9% in 1975 were described as farmers.

Approximately 42% of the mothers were employed outside the home in 1969 compared to approximately 52% in 1975. Employment was mainly in the lower 5 of the 8 U.S. Census categories. Many mothers worked in factories of various types—such as textile plants—in surrounding counties.

Mothers' social participation. Mothers' church affiliations and/or attendance were 77% in 1969 compared to 88% in 1975. Membership in clubs and organizations remained about the same, 23% and 22%. Those who voted remained the same, 72%.

Contact with news media. In 1969, 96% of the mothers reported that someone in the family took or read a daily newspaper compared to 79% in 1975. The percent of families in which someone listened every day to news on radio or television remained about the same, 91% and 88%.

RESULTS

OCCUPATIONAL GOALS AND RELATED INFORMATION

Aspirations and Expectations

In both 1969 and 1975 the young people were asked. "If you could choose any job you wanted, what kind of job would you really like to have?" and "What kind of job do you think you really will have when you grow up?" The first question assesses aspirations and the second expectations. Responses were classified into eight U.S. Census occupational categories (Table 2).

Aspirations in 1969 were relatively high; 42% of the boys and 62% of the girls desired to obtain jobs in the professional-technical category. Six years later these percentages had dropped to 22% for males and 26% for females. Shifts were mainly to the craftsmen-foremen category for males and to the clerical-sales category for females.

Expectations also decreased over the 6-year period; responses declined in the professional-technical category from 42% to 15% for males and 44% to 9% for females. The "No response, don't know, housewife" category increased to 18% for males and 30% for females, indicating a good deal of uncertainity, particularly for females. The youth showed increasing ability to discriminate between what they would like to do and what they expected to do, which may indicate more realistic appraisals of their abilities and the job possibilities in their environment. However, the decrease could also be interpreted to mean lack of ambition or lack of career opportunity information.

Specific names of job choices given by youth are listed in Tables 3 and 4 since these show more clearly the way young people themselves visualized future employment. Females lost interest in be-

Table 2. Occupation aspired and expected by youth, 1969 and 1975

Major occupational categories	1969				1975			
	Males N=88		Females N=88		Males N=87		Females N=80	
	Asp.	Exp.	Asp.	Exp.	Asp.	Exp.	Asp.	Exp.
	Percent				Percent			
Professional, technical, and kindred workers	42	42	62	44	22	15	26	9
Farmers and farm managers	6	10	0	1	1	3	1	1
Managers, officials, and proprietors, except farm	0	0	0	2	6	2	0	0
Clerical, sales, and kindred workers	2	1	6	9	6	2	38	30
Craftsmen, foremen, and kindred workers	17	13	0	0	32	24	2	0
Operative and kindred workers	11	14	5	6	10	10	3	3
Service and private household workers	13	8	17	18	0	0	15	6
Laborers, including farm	6	10	4	2	10	26	4	21
No response, don't know, housewife, uncodable	3	2	6	17	13	18	11	30

Table 3. Specific employment aspired and expected by females, 1969 and 1975

Occupation	1969 N=88		1975 N=80	
	Asp.	Exp.	Asp.	Exp.
	Percent			
Teacher	31	22	1	0
Nurse	23	17	14	5
Beautician	10	9	4	1
Factory worker	9	9	6	27
Secretary, office work, bookkeeper	8	8	33	21
Day care, babysitter, nursery	5	7	2	3
Housewife	2	14	3	11
Physician	2	14	5	1
Stewardess, airport work	2	1	0	0
Model	1	1	3	0
Cook, waitress, restaurant, kitchen work	1	1	2	1
Veterinarian, work with animals	1	1	2	0
Nurse's aide, hospital work, rest home attendant	1	0	4	1
Store keeper	0	2	0	6
Bank teller, cashier, sales clerk	0	1	5	5
Accountant, computar programmer	0	0	3	1
Social worker, "help people"	0	0	2	0
Scientist	0	0	1	0
Other*	2	1	3	1
No response, don't know	1	2	5	16

*Maid, singer, farmer, policewoman, Armed Forces, newspaper reporter, poet, artist, interior decorator.

Table 4. Specific employment aspired and expected by males, 1969 and 1975

Occupation	1969 N=88		1975 N=87	
	Asp.	Exp.	Asp.	Exp.
	Percent			
Policeman, fireman	10	7	0	0
Carpenter, painter, construction	9	8	18	21
Athlete	8	8	3	0
Truck driver	7	8	6	5
Farmer	6	11	1	4
Musician, singer	6	5	2	2
Mechanic	6	2	18	18
Scientist	6	2	0	0
Factory worker	5	10	3	7
Electrician, welder, repairman, machinist	5	5	10	5
Doctor, veterinarian	4	7	3	0
Lawyer	4	2	0	0
Race car driver	3	6	0	0
Pilot, astronaut, air force	3	5	0	0
Artist	3	2	1	1
Sales	2	1	4	3
Barber	2	1	0	0
TVA, State Forest Division	2	1	0	0
Teacher	1	2	1	1
Explorer, skin diver	1	2	0	0
Logging, tree trimming, highway work	1	1	5	5
Clerical	1	1	1	4
Executive, dealership	0	0	4	0
X-ray technician	0	0	3	3
Engineer, surveyor	0	0	2	1
Other*	3	2	5	4
No response or don't know	2	1	9	15

*Minister, actor, train engineer, outside work, accountant, butcher.

coming teachers as shown by the decrease in aspirations and expectations from 31% to 22%, respectively, to 1% and 0%. Females also showed less interest in becoming nurses. This helps explain decreases in responses in the professional-technical category as shown in Table 2. For males, employment as a mechanic and in construction work were named more often while that of policeman, fireman, athlete, musician were named less often.

Information Related to Job Choices

A preliminary question asked whether the young person had ever thought about what kind of job s/he wanted. Only 11% reponded "no" in 1969 and 10% in 1975. In 1975, 83% of the males and 74% of the females indicated they had thought about their desired job for several years, and 79% of the males and 58% of the females thought it likely that they would be able to get that kind of job. However, since aspirations had decreased by this time, 1975, these estimates were not necessarily unrealistic.

A majority of subjects heard about the desired employment through either a family member (41% males and 30% females) or someone else they knew who held that kind of job (45% males and 39% females). These responses indicate the importance of direct personal contact or role models. This may be one reason for decreased aspirations, since in a rural low-income family, personal contacts with those in the higher U.S. Census categories are usually limited.

Only one-fourth had heard about their desired job at school. As teenagers, males talked with mothers (71%) as often as with fathers (67%), while a larger percentage of females talked with mothers (62%) than with fathers (41%). However, in general males talked more often than females to others than parents.

Females considered the advice of mothers about future plans most important (72% in 1969 and 39% in 1975) while males considered the advice of fathers most important (57% and 40%, respectively). Although percentages were lower in 1975, as might be expected with increased maturity of the child, these were still higher than for any other persons. For example, although about 20-20% talked to teachers, practically none considered their advice as most important.

Youths' perceptions of job acquisition deterrents. In 1975 the young people were asked, "How much do you think the following things might keep you from getting the job you would really like?" About two-thirds of each sex checked lack of good job opportunities "around here" and 35-40% checked that they did not want to move away from family and friends. More females (53%) than males (43%) indicated concern about money to go to college. About 40% of each sex indicated they felt they lacked information about jobs. This is an

important finding from the standpoint of showing the need for provision of more employment information in schools, from parents, from educational television, field trips, and other sources. Thirty percent of the males and 38% of the females thought their schools were a deterrent and 33% of the males and 37% of the females thought they were "not smart enough."

Important aspects of desired employment. The young people were asked, "In picking the job you would most like to have, how important are the following things about the job."

If percentages of "important" and "extremely important" were combined, responses of males were as follows: steady employment, 95%; making money, 90%; exciting and interesting work, 84%; and helping others, 85%. Similar responses for females were: helping others, 95%; steady employment, 91%; exciting and interesting work, 87%; and making money, 84%. In general, males had slightly more interest in making money and females had slightly more interest in helping others.

The chance to become an important person was considered important or extremely important by approximately 60% of each sex. The item that showed the greatest difference between the sexes was the chance to be one's own boss. About twice as many males as females (29% and 13%) considered this extremely important and when the two levels of responses were combined, about two-thirds of the males compared to about one-third of the females showed interest in this aspect.

Opinions on Marriage and Family Life

Questions regarding expected age of marriage, number of children desired, opinions about married women working outside the home, and desired place of residence are considered to have some bearing on educational and occupational goals.

Expected age of marriage. In 1975, 7% of the males and 31% of the females were already married, and 20% of the males and 9% of the females did not think they would ever marry. For the remainder, 27% of the males and 45% of the females expected to be married by age 21. The finding that approximately 75% of the females were either already married at the 11th or 12th grade level or expected to be married by age 21 indicates that the national trend toward later marriage apparently may not apply to this sample of youth. (Average age of marriage of mothers was 19.5 years and of fathers, 22.5 years.) When asked who influenced their opinion, 53% of the males and 75% of the females indicated their mothers. Fathers were named less often—45% by males and 54% by females.

Number of children desired. Range for number of children desired was from 1 to 6. Forty-six percent of the males and 54% of the

females desired 2 children. Average number was 1.8 for males and 2.2 for females. About one-half of each sex reported that no one had influenced their opinions; mothers were named by 22% of the males and 27% of the females. Opinions were apparently not influenced as directly by parents and others as were opinions regarding expected age of marriage. However, they were probably indirectly influenced by the number of children in their own family (average of 4.0). The trend toward preference for smaller families was apparently confirmed by this group of young people.

Working wives. Four statements were utilitized to measure opinions about whether a married woman should work outside the home. Twenty-two percent of the males and 8% of the females thought a wife should work only if the husband was unable to do so. At the opposite extreme, 28% of the males and 21% of the females thought the wife should work is she wanted to. Approximately 50% of the males and 70% of the females were of the opinion the mother might work if the children were in high school or there was a good sitter. About one-third of both males and females indicated their mothers had influenced their opinions.

Results imply somewhat more conservatism in general on the parts of males. However, the desirability of employment for the wife in families of low-income level may revolve mainly around need for increased family income rather than a felt need to enlarge personal experiences or improve the quality of life. Also, problems of travel distance and child care arrangement for rural women are serious considerations.

Preferred place of residence. Approximately three-fourths of each sex reported they preferred "this community" when asked where they would really like to live in the future. About 90% reported they preferred living in the country or in a small town. Apparently some of the young people—particularly those with higher aspirations—might have to choose between a desired career and a desired residence. However, at the time these questions were asked, many of the youth had lowered their aspirations or expectations to the extent that they might not have to make a hard choice or had already done so. It has been noted that about two-thirds of the young people checked "lack of good jobs around here" as a deterrent to getting their desired job. An additional consideration might be the amount of traveling they would be willing to undertake for training and/or employment.

Mothers' goals for their children

Mothers' aspirations for professional-technical careers were similar for both males and females (56% for males and 49% for females). However, expectations were about half these percentages. By 1975

aspirations themselves were much lower (32% for males and 23% for females), and as in 1969 expectations were about half as great as apirations. It is uncertain whether the decreases were due to loss of interest by mothers in professional-technical careers for their children, or whether they were influenced by what they felt were realities of their children's life situations. Shifts were toward craftsmen for sons and clerical-sales and service workers for females.

Mothers' opinions on changes in financial conditions and satisfaction with living conditions. In 1975, mothers were asked "So far as your overall financial position is concerned, would you say you are better off, about the same, or worse off now than you were 5 to 10 years ago?" Forty-seven percent considered themselves better off, 30% about the same, and 22% worse off. Apparently the lower expectations expressed in 1975 were not entirely related to worsening in financial position. (However, as shown in a later section, mothers' responses to this question were associated with whether the children dropped out of school.)

When mothers were asked to estimate the total annual family income in 1975, the majority estimated less than $10,000 with around 50% indicating less than $6,000.

Mothers were also asked, "How do you feel about your present living conditions—the kind of house, clothing, car, opportunities for children, and so on?" Thirty-six percent were very satisfied, 56% fairly staisfied, and 8% dissatisfied. As with change in financial position, there was not enough dissatisfaction expressed to account for lowering of expectations for the child although it is possible that mothers may have been reluctant to give negative appraisals of their extent of satisfaction.

Mothers' anomia

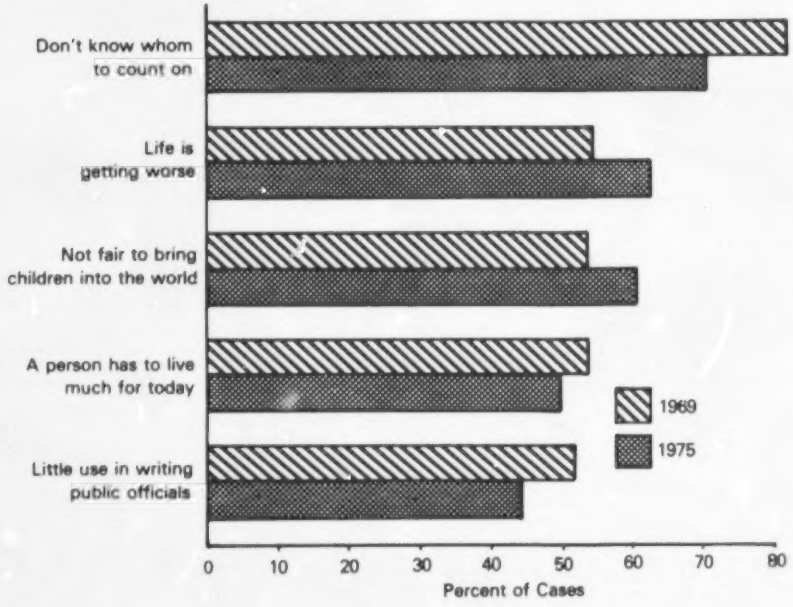
Five questions were utilized to measure the mothers' sense of hopelessness, powerlessness, social malintegration, or alienation.[4] Since the scale was also used in 1969, comparisons for the two time periods can be made. Percentages of anomic responses were relatively high on most items, with approximately 50% or more answering in this direction in both 1969 and 1975 (Figure 1).

Fathers' employment and sons' aspirations

The preceding data indicated that parents had considerable influence on their children's goals. Therefore, it is of interest to observe the fathers' employment category compared with aspirations and expectations of males (Figure 2).

[4] "Anomia Scale" by Lee Srole (Robinson & Shaver, 1969).

Figure 1. Responses of mothers on Anomia Scale, 1969 and 1975.



Although practically no fathers were employed in the professional-technical category, about 20% of the teenage males aspired to this type employment but their expectations were less. At the lower end of the employment scale, more teenage males expected to be laborers than the percentage of fathers who worked in that category. As has been noted previously, over half the fathers' jobs were in the craftsmen and operatives categories.

EDUCATIONAL GOALS AND RELATED INFORMATION

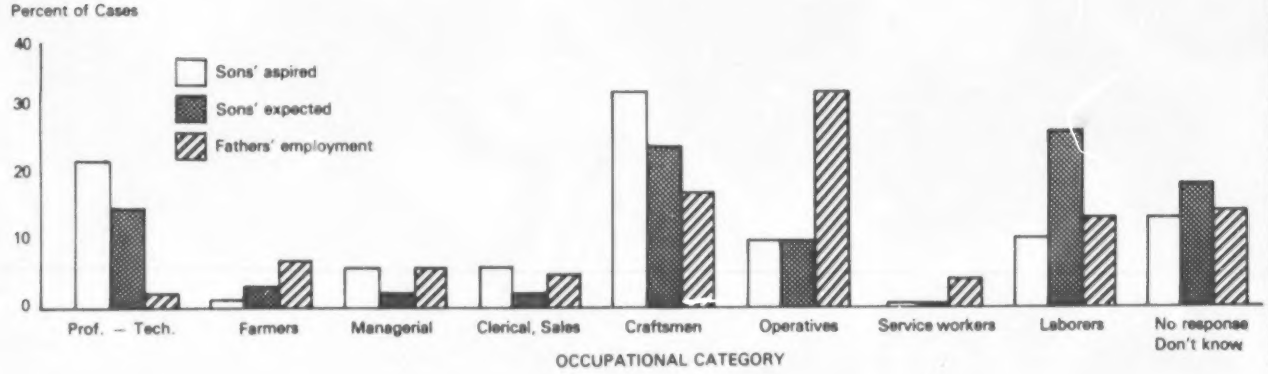
Aspirations and Expectations

In both 1969 and 1975 the youth were asked how far they would really like to go in school and how far they thought they would really go.

Aspirations for college work or beyond decreased from 56% for males and 56% for females in 1969 to 24% and 20%, respectively, in 1975. **Expectations** decreased from 51% for males and 29% for

21

Figure 2. Fathers' employment and aspired and expected occupation of male youth, 1975.



females to 12% and 6%, respectively. The follow-up in 1976 showed that only 2 students in the sample who graduated in 1975 enrolled in college although a few more were taking specialized training. Thus, the decrease in expectations appeared to be realistic. This finding also emphasizes the point that it is a mistake to interpret expectations as "plans" as is sometimes done.

The number of those who desired and expected to attend a trade school after high school increased, and this may have reflected the youths' awareness that during the period from 1969 to 1975 an increased number of vocational-technical programs were provided throughout the area and state. However, even at this vocational-technical level, aspirations were greater than expectations (desired, 26% of the males and 39% of the females, but expected, 15% and 24%, respectively).

Academic Motivation. Children's interest in school work and similar school-oriented attitudes are usually considered to influence educational goals. Motivation for school work, as judged from 10 items, was relatively high in 1969. Eighty-five percent to 100% indicated they usually finished homework, liked to go to school, tried get better grades, tried to get good grades, and were interested in their school work. By 1975, percentages were lower on these items but not markedly so. In general, females showed more motivation than males on all items. For example, 57% of the males were glad to get back to school after summer vacation compared to 72% of the females. An item of particular interest concerned time spent studying or reading at home. For males this decreased from 84% for those responding "several times a week" in 1969, to 36% in 1975. For females the decrease was only from 78% to 70%.

Influence of Parents and Others. Both as preadolescents and adolescents, the youth named mothers as the person talked to most often about educational goals. As adolescents, 90% of the males and 81% of the females had talked with their mothers and 80% of the males and 70% of the females to their fathers. As previously reported, parents were also considered the most important advisors about future plans in general (40% of the males named father and 33% of the females named mother). Only 6% of the males and none of the females named teacher as the most important advisor about future plans.

Mothers' Educational Goals for Their Children. As was true for their children, mothers' aspirations for college attendance were greater than their expectations. By 1975, 57% of the mothers of males and 38% of mothers of females still **aspired** for college level work but only 13% and 12%, respectively, **expected** this. Evidently both teenagers and their mothers had become more realistic about the outlook for higher education. As with their children, mothers showed in-

creased interest in trade school after high school although mothers had named this possibility more often than their children in 1969.

Youths' perceptions of their parents' educational aspirations for them were compared to the mothers' stated aspirations and to the children's aspirations for themselves. Categories were constructed according to the goals of less than high school, high school only, and beyond high school. In both 1969 and 1975, the largest percentages were in the beyond high school category. For example, in 1975, mothers' aspirations for their sons were highest (77%); sons' perceptions of parent's goals were lower (60%); and their own aspirations were lowest (50%). Mothers' aspirations were the same as their daughters (60%) while the daughters' perceptions of parent's goals were somewhat higher (68%). In general, children's goals for themselves tended to be closer to their perceptions of parents' aspirations than to the mothers' stated goals. But it should be remembered that expectations of children and mothers in both 1969 and 1975 were much lower than aspirations.

SCHOOL DROPOUTS

Descriptive Information

Of the 176 young people studied, 64 or 36% dropped out or were believed to have dropped before completing high school. These consisted of 25 males (28%) and 39 females (43%). Data on dropouts were based on responses of 25 males and 31 females obtained in 1975.

The majority of dropouts were 15 or 16 years of age and in the 8th, 9th, or 10th grade. There was only one high school in the county, and it may have been difficult for some students to make the transition from their 8th grade class to this school.

Seventy-six percent of the males and 68% of the females indicated they had quit for good, 12% of the males and 3% of the females thought they would probably go back to school, and the remainder (12% males, 29% females) thought they might take special training.

Persons the young people talked to most often about leaving school were mothers (60% males, 45% females) and fathers (44% and 13%, respectively). However, 20% of the males and 36% of the females reported they had talked to "no one."

Reasons for Dropping Out

Responses given by young people and by their mothers concerning the primary reasons for dropping out were classified into 10 categories (Table 5). Problems concerned with general dislike of school were reported by about one-third of both boys and girls, although only 20% of the mothers of boys and 9% of the mothers of the girls gave this as a reason.

Table 5. Principal reason for dropping out—youth and mothers

Principal reason for dropping out	Youth			Mothers		
	Boys N=25	Girls N=32	Combined N=57	Boys N=25	Girls N=32	Combined N=57
	Percent					
General dislike of the school, the teachers, the principal, pupils, couldn't get along	36	31	33	20	9	14
Lack of academic motivation	20	10	14	40	19	28
Marriage	4	25	16	0	22	12
Poor or "irrelevant" curriculum or teaching, or desire for skills, training, or other things	12	3	7	4	3	4
Academic problems—failing, not keeping up, having to repeat subjects or grades, etc.	4	10	7	4	6	5
Financial problems or need to work or help family with work or income, desire to be financially independent	8	6	7	4	9	7
Illness in family or own health problems	4	6	5	8	3	5
Other—to see the world, in jail, expelled, suspended, not allowed specific privileges	8	3	5	8	6	7
Bad school environment—specific problems such as drugs, violence, language, dress, "bad influences," etc.	0	3	2	0	6	4
No answer, no reason given	4	3	4	12	16	14

Lack of academic motivation (not interested, wants to work or get into the real world, etc.) was given by more mothers (28%) than youth (14%), and this reason was given about twice as often by males as by females. On the other hand, marriage was given as a reason by about one-fourth the females and their mothers.

Although difficulty with academic subjects was mentioned by 10% or less of either mothers or youth, it is likely that this problem was involved more often than indicated. Average IQ of the entire sample of 5th/6th graders was 92.8, and 65% of the dropouts scored less than 90.

There were interesting differences and similarities between the perspectives of mothers and their children as to reasons for dropping out. In one instance, both mother and child reported that dropping out occurred because the child needed glasses that parents could not afford. In another instance, the child gave no reason while the mother said the child had been expelled. A girl said she could not keep up with the work and did not try hard enough, but the mother said that she quit to go to work. A boy said there is "no future" in continuing while the mother said he did not want to do academic work. A girl said she quit after the 8th grade because she was afraid she could not do the high school work; the mother indicated she wanted to go to work.

At the end of the questionnaire for dropouts, youth were asked to give comments if they desired to do so. Some of these are quoted here. A young man who had dropped out after the 8th grade commented, "A person might know all there is to know about something, but he still needs to be qualified or certified." Another stated that he would like to have vocational training to learn a good paying job. A young woman who had married wrote, "Please stay in school." Another young woman stated, "We are not all alike—each one has to do what he thinks is right for him. I have no regrets about school so far."

1969 Variables Most Predictive of Later School Dropout[5]

One objective of the 1975 follow-up was to find which of the variables measured in 1969 bore the strongest relationship to whether the child dropped out of school. These are listed below.

For **both males and females**, the lower the scholastic aptitude score (IQ), the greater the chance of dropout.

For **males only** (in addition to IQ), the lower the educational goals the greater the chance of dropout.

[5] Multiple regression analyses of 22 selected variables. Tables may be obtained from the researchers.

For **females only** (in addition to IQ), lower academic motivation of the child; lower educational goals of the mother; greater incidence of no husband in the home; higher occupational goals of the mother. This last finding was unexpected—the higher the occupational goals of the mother the greater the female's chance of dropping out. This may reflect a lack of control on the part of a mother who, while stating high goals, nevertheless could not or did not keep her child in school. Alternatively, it may have reflected the daughter's fear of her ability to live up to mother's expectations.

Comparison of Those Who Were Dropouts with Those Who Stayed in School[6]

Youth (males and females) who dropped out thought less about future employment, talked to father less, and to classmates less about the kind of future job desired. They also talked to classmates less about how far they should go in school and to "no one" more (19% compared to 2%). Their reported grade point average was lower; they desired less education and expected less education. More dropouts thought their parents would like them to finish high school at least, but fewer indicated their parents "insisted" they finish high school (13% compared to 76%). A larger percentage had talked to parents about dropping out (68% compared to 33%). More were married (58% compared to 14%).

Mothers of both male and female dropouts had lower aspirations and lower expectations for post high school education, but they had talked to their children more than mothers of stayins about how far they would go in school. Their current estimated income was lower. Also, fewer families took or read a daily newspaper and fewer heard a news program every day.

There were 10 additional items that differentiated male dropouts from stayins and 17 that differentiated female dropouts. Thus, in general, females seemed to be influenced more by personal and family factors than males. A total of 52 items did not differentiate dropouts from stayins in these low-income families. For example, although dropouts wanted and expected less education, there were no significant differences regarding occupations wanted and expected.

Work Status Comparison in 1976 of 1975 Graduates and Dropouts

In addition to the comprehensive follow-up carried out in 1975, a brief follow-up was carried out in 1976. This provided for rough comparison of the 56 dropouts with 39 students in the sample who

[6] Chi-square analyses. Tables may be obtained from the researchers.

finished high school in 1975 and had been out of school a year. Further follow-up is planned in 1979.

Figure 3 is a graphic comparison of status of the two groups. Fifty-six percent of the male dropouts and 36% of the females were employed compared to 78% of the male graduates and 69% of the female graduates. More dropouts—particularly females (64%)—were working in service jobs while only 18% of the graduates held such employment. Approximately one-third of both male and female graduates were classified as laborers compared to 43% of the male and 9% of the female dropouts. (Many jobs in factories and plants were assigned the laborer classification.) Some of the specific jobs held by dropouts included working in grocery stores, clothing manufacturing plants, carpeting and cabinet-making firms, poultry processing plants, or in motels, hospitals, or restaurants. Jobs held by graduates included working in factories and plants, as cashiers, maintenance men, janitors, substitute teachers, inspectors in plants, salesmen, truck drivers, and in electrical and plumbing work. One person was taking electronic training in the army, one was attending a community college, and another a 4-year college. Several were taking taining in such fields as secretarial work and auto diesel mechanics.

SUMMARY AND IMPLICATIONS

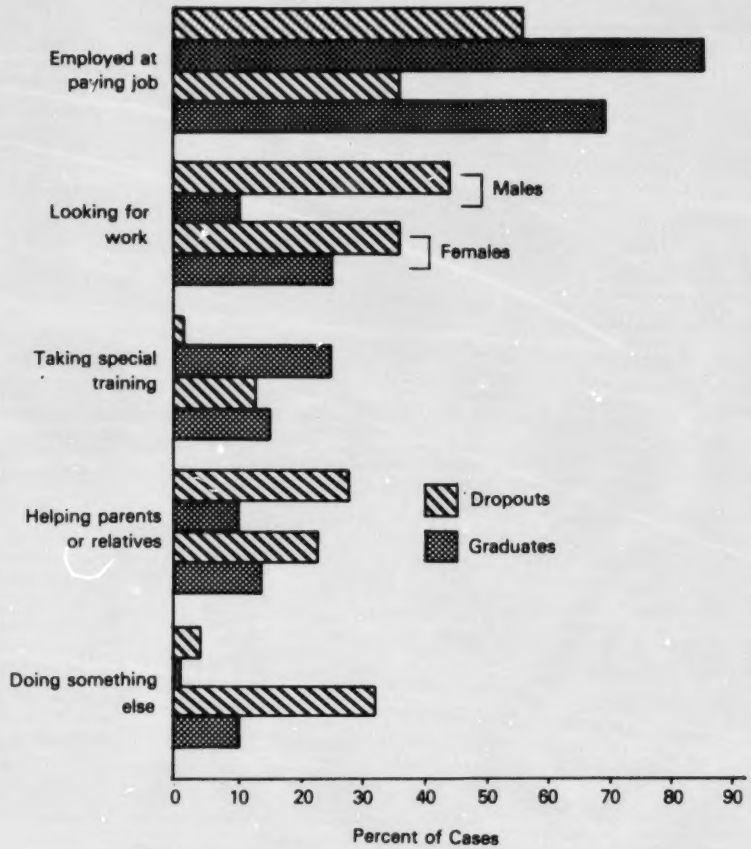
Although occupational aspirations of children were relatively high in 1969 in that 42% of the males and 62% of the females named jobs in the professional-technical category, these decreased by about one-half by 1975. Expectations decreased to 15% for males and to 9% for females. This pattern was similar to the mothers' goals.

The lowered expectations of Tennessee youth and their mothers were congruent with the actual professional-technical employment in Tennessee and the nation, but there is some question as to whether these expectations will be reached. The current findings imply that the problem is not that occupational aspirations necessarily need to be raised but that youth need more home and school help in setting and reaching meaningful goals.

Aspirations and expectations of mothers were generally similar to those of youth although mothers held more tenaciously to higher aspirations. In both 1969 and 1975, the young people considered parents the most important advisors about future plans, but the quality of this reported help is unclear. In fact, both young people and their mothers expressed a good deal of uncertainty about future employment. This was no doubt a realistic attitude considering lack of opportunities for training or employment in the rural areas.

Aspirations may well be influenced by expectations but expectations themselves reflect influence of others. A majority of youth

Figure 3. Work status comparison of dropouts and 1975 graduates, 1976.[1]



[1] Some persons checked more than one category.

had heard about their desired job through parents or family members who held that kind of job. Approximately one-fourth of the young people had heard about their desired job at school, but only 6% of the males and none of the females named teacher as the most important advisor about future plans. It is likely that restricted goals of the young people were based on the limited variety of the role models available, particularly for females.

Vocational-technical training in the schools and elsewhere has become increasingly available during the last few years and this may alter young people's current and future goals. However, individual counseling and specific assistance is often needed to help a young

rural person take the first step toward training or employment. Unfortunately, most rural elementary and secondary schools cannot afford to employ trained counselors who can give specific academic and vocational advice. A full-time counselor load of 300 students or less is usually recommended.

The youth themselves reported a lack of information about jobs. A majority were concerned also with the lack of good job opportunities in their rural area. The extent of migration of Appalachian mountain people in the past is well known although this trend may have stopped or been reversed. It remains to be seen whether the Tennessee youth will stay in their rural areas. This may depend partly on the distances they will be willing to travel for training or employment and the cost and availability of transportation.

Forty percent of the youth indicated that lack of money to go to college represented a detriment to obtaining their desired job. This is a relatively high percent since by 1975 aspirations for professional-technical employment had dropped. However, this decrease may have reflected realization that it would not be possible to attend college.

Findings concerning anomic attitudes of mothers were congruent with those found by several other investigators. They believed many southern Appalachian people tended to hold values that were logically conflicting in that they accepted their current life status, but at the same time indicated they would like to improve their life status. Only 8% of the Tennessee mothers expressed dissatisfaction with their current living conditions (which included "opportunities for your children"). This points up the problem expressed by some researchers that persons working with low-income families need to be sensitive to attitudes of resignation or fatalism.

Educational goals

As with occupational goals, young people's educational goals decreased markedly from the time they were in the 5th or 6th grade and when they were high school juniors or seniors. In 1969, approximately 50% of the males and 60% of the females desired to go to college, but by 1975 these figures were 20% and 24%, respectively, and expectations were even lower. Continued follow-up may show larger numbers taking advantage of increasing opportunities provided by vocational-technical training and community colleges.

It is not clear whether lack of academic motivation or such factors as lack of money for college or lack of urging by parents was the most important factor in influencing the young people's decreased educational aspirations and expectations. These aspects will be clarified in a later follow-up study, One might ask whether higher initial goals by mothers and children reflected societal goals or com-

mitment to personal goals. It has been found by several investigators that Appalachian people tend to believe in the importance of higher education despite what appears to be inability to accomplish such goals. Many Appalachian families apparently attribute lack of success to lack of higher education rather than lack of hard work because they believe that obtaining a higher education is beyond their control.

School dropouts

The dropout rate for the sample (28% for males and 43% for females) was congruent with the known seriousness of the problem for rural youth in the South. Reasons for dropping out centered around dislike of school and lack of academic motivation although 25% of the female dropouts gave marriage as the reason. Few young people (less than 10%) reported financial exigency as the major reason for leaving school, although this may have been more important than indicated by mother or child in these low-income families.

Analyses of 22 personal and family variables measured in 1969 revealed that 6 were significantly related to chance of dropout for one or both sexes. These were IQ (scholastic aptitude), educational goals, academic motivation, educational goals of mothers, occupational goals of mothers (negatively related), and no husband in the household (7% of the families). Further research on the specific influences that result in dislike of school by many rural low-income students is necessary.

Analyses of differences between dropouts and stayins in 1975 confirmed the importance of most of the above 1969 predictors of chance of dropout as well as giving additional information about the youth as they became older. Although educational goals—particularly for post high school work—were lower for dropouts, it is understandable that after a child has dropped out of school, lower goals might be stated by both mother and child. Nevertheless, only 28% of the dropouts **desired** less than high school graduation (compared to none of the stayins) and practically no mothers of either group desired less than high school graduation for their children.

However, more dropouts thought their parents did not want them to go **beyond** high school (81% of the dropouts compared to 22% of the stayins). In general, females were more susceptible to parental and environmental influences than males and these revealed important differences. Also of particular interest: there were so many variables (52) in these low-income families that did not show significant differences between dropouts and stayins. This points up the importance of studying the factors that were significant in order to decide which are amenable to efforts at prevention and remediation.

Since the 1976 follow-up showed that more high school graduates were employed at paying jobs than dropouts, the value of the high school diploma might be considered to be confirmed. On the other hand, few of either group were taking special training or going to college, and it remains to be seen whether there will continue to be differences in employment status. The belief of Bachman, et al. (1971) that there should be alternatives to high school for youth age 16 to 18 deserves serious considerations. Possibly some of the demands made on citizens in an industrial society are too great, and values for "success" need clarification.

General implications are that by at least the 5th or 6th grade it is important that children be oriented toward the value of education if higher occupational and educational goals are to be attained and chance of dropout minimized. Obviously many children need specific help in their homes and schools. Just as obviously, many rural families and rural schools do not have the funds and/or expertise to give such help. In his "Common Man" study, Kahl (1953) argued that parents need to impart the drive to "get ahead," not just "get by." But it is exceedingly difficult for low-income parents to give constant encouragement to their children, require good performance, provide rewards, and discuss the cultural value of education when the parents themselves may lack adequate schooling and other resources.

In a study done on rural high school dropouts by Fuller & Friedrich, the question was asked, "Why wasn't something done?" Studies show that the following needs exist: employment of trained elementary and high school counselors at the proper ratio, courses in career education from the early grades, and methods of helping rural parents learn ways to encourage their children academically and to learn about employment opportunities and training.

In concluding this discussion, it should be emphasized that the main value of the project was that data came from within the contex of low-income families in a specific geographic area. The study compared goals between the time children were in elementary school and the time they were of an age to graduate from high school. This is of particular interest because there is a dearth of longitudinal data in reference to rural children and the dropout problem.

Besides confirming the influence of such factors as scholastic aptitude and academic motivation, much more information about the thinking and attitudes of the youth and their families was obtained. A general conclusion drawn from the data was that constructive encouragement and assistance for continued education and/or training were not often an integral part of the child's family experience or school background. This remains a major unsolved problem in the face of socioeconomic difficulties of both families and schools.

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